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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002668

SIPDIS

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TAGS: MASS MARR NT

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MPRI IPR - WILL THE PROGRAM CONTINUE?

REF: ABUJA 2653

(U) Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: A mostly positive In-Progress-Review of the MPRI program was followed by a discussion of MPRI funding issues for 2002. Claiming the GON was unaware that the program required an annual commitment of \$3.5m, Defense Minister Danjuma suggested a new arrangement with a significantly smaller burden on the GON. The unfinished discussion on funding will be resumed by Generals Vuono and Saint and President Obasanjo, at a meeting likely on October 124. END SUMMARY.

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PRE-IPR MEETING
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¶12. (SBU) Prior to the MPRI In-Progress-Review (IPR), OSD/ISA African Affairs Director Theresa Whelan met Defense Minister Danjuma to discuss the MPRI Program. DATT, COL Terry Tidler, PolMilOff, and MPRI VP General Crosbie Saint (ret), along with Danjuma's PSO Colonel Pennap and a State Security Service Officer were in attendance. (Ambassador Jeter was unable to attend due to a meeting with the Vice President, but did attend the IPR.)

¶13. (SBU) Whelan emphasized the importance of the MPRI program as a cornerstone of the military-to-military relationship, which had implications for the entire security assistance program, and solicited Danjuma's views on moving the program forward. Danjuma agreed on the program's importance, stating he would like it to continue. However, he said the GON had been unaware the program would cost \$3.5m annually. No money had been budgeted for FY02. Moreover, the value of the program would have to be demonstrated to the National Assembly. Although, "totally in favor of the program," Danjuma explained he could not force it on his Service Chiefs, and would have to "carry them along."

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IN-PROGRESS-REVIEW: SOME PROGRESS NOTED
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¶14. (SBU) The MPRI team's briefing emphasized significant progress since the last IPR in April, largely due to the GON providing counterparts for the team. After the briefing, a discussion ensued on funding for 2002. Chief of Defense Staff, Admiral Ibrahim Ogohi, argued that money had not been budgeted for 2002. "Who will pay?", Ogohi questioned. Danjuma offered that, since Nigeria faced more financial constraints than the United States, Nigeria could fund their counterparts for 2002 while the U.S. absorbed the cost of the American counterparts (i.e. the larger portion of the tab). We are at the mercy of world oil prices and cannot count on a supplemental budget, Danjuma explained.

¶15. (SBU) Joining the IPR in progress, the Ambassador explained that this was Nigeria's program, and that funding demonstrated commitment. The 50-50 split had a symbolic impact in Washington. Furthermore, if the U.S. were to bear a greater burden, it would affect other security assistance programs, such as the C-130 program or the buoy tenders. (COMMENT: This statement brought about a look of surprise on the Chief of Air Staff's face, who exclaimed, "I hope not the C-130s!" When Danjuma mentioned the buoy tenders, Ogohi began to shake his head in a defiant "No." END COMMENT.) Finally, there were simply some things that friends and supporters should not do. Nigeria should be seen by its people as leading the reform effort, Jeter opined. That meant footing half of the bill.

16. (SBU) After further discussions, it was agreed to try to accelerate the program, and then review progress again. General Saint noted, however, that until the MOD gave instructions on a number of proposals, acceleration could not occur. Danjuma said the MOD would redouble its efforts to be responsive.

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COMMENT - NEXT STOP, THE PRESIDENT

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17. (C) COMMENT: We believe that Danjuma supports the program, as he insists. However, budget constraints, skepticism in the National Assembly for defense-related spending, and, not least, Service Chief foot-dragging, constrain him. Danjuma told us during a meeting on October 10 that he would make a recommendation to President Obasanjo on renewing the program. He also said he planned to attend the meeting between the President and Generals Vuono and Saint, which we hope to arrange for October 24.

18. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: While Danjuma's world oil price predictions may be correct, sufficient money can be found for the program if the President desires to do so. We will push for this outcome. However, if the GON is unwilling to pay its fair share, then other options, including ending the program, will have to be considered. END COMMENT.

19. (U) This message was cleared by Theresa Whelan.
Jeter